

Area: 188,456 sq. mi., almost twice size of Nevada
Capital: Ashgabat
Population: 4.5): 72% Turkmen; 9% Russian; 9% Uzbek, 2% Kazak,
Population by Age Group: 0-14, 38%; 15-64, 58%; 65+, 4%.
Population Growth Rate: 1.87% **Rural:** 55%, **Urban:** 45%
Life Expectancy at birth 60.9: male 57.3, female 64.8
Birth Rate: 28.9/100; **Infant Mortality** rate: 73.3/1000
Per Capita Income: PPP \$1800 (1999 est)
Language usage: Turkmen 77%, Russian 12%, Uzbek 9%
Religion: Sunni Muslim, 89%; Orthodox, 9%
Literacy: 87% : male: 99%, female: 97%



President: Saparmurad Niyazov
Ambassador to U.S: Mered Orazov

Political Issues: Saparmurad Niyazov was unchallenged in the 1992 Presidential election. In 1994 the electorate extended his term until 2002, and in 1999 he was declared President for Life, thus confirming, in effect, his complete domination of government. There is no political dissent within Turkmenistan, and most political opponents to Niyazov are in exile, or in prison. The Democratic Party has a monopoly on political power, and parliament (the Mejlis), has no real authority. The judicial branch, unreformed since Soviet times, provides no check on executive power. Turkmenistan is a member of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) and does not participate in regional military groupings.

Economic Issues: Turkmenistan's economic growth is heavily reliant on exports, benefiting in 2000 from high global commodity prices and the resumption of gas sales to Russia and Ukraine. Agriculture, the largest sector of the economy, is still unreformed and may actually have declined over the past few years. The limiting factor is the scarcity of water resources. Turkmenistan has large deposits of oil and gas, and is able to finance its economic policies through gas sales, most of which are still to Russia and other NIS countries. Convertibility problems top the list of business-related problems for foreign investors. The official exchange rate, required for foreigners, is roughly a fourth of the black-market rate. Foreign firms convert the local currency, the manat, into hard currency with substantial losses. Official corruption is another obstacle to foreign investment, and is fueled by the double exchange rate. Real GDP growth is forecast at 9% in 2001, falling to 7% in 2002.

Overview of USAID's Focus in Turkmenistan

Cross-cutting Programs/Special Initiatives: USAID's private-sector development programs provide credit, technical expertise, and training, and are increasingly focused on small and medium-sized enterprises. The objectives of USAID's modest-sized democracy programs in Turkmenistan were to encourage citizen participation, foster democratic concepts, and facilitate access to information. USAID pursued these objectives by supporting non-governmental organizations' (NGO) efforts in the areas of civic and legal education, as well as community development and self-help activities. U.S. Government-funded humanitarian assistance is targeted at vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the disabled, and disaster victims. Some specific activities include: Technical assistance aimed at creating sound fiscal, trade and investment policies, management practices, and better commercial and business laws. However, due to the paucity of results from this investment, USAID has closed out its programs for trade and investment and privatization. USAID is continuing to support budget reform efforts in Turkmenistan for the time being. Internationally recognized financial and accounting classifications and coding have been established with USAID help. USAID's work with non-governmental organizations (NGO's) aims to develop a range of skills to encourage and enable citizens to more actively participate in local government and policy making. Over 1,500 members of some 200 Turkmen NGOs and civic groups participated in Counterpart training programs in FY 2000. A Law Students' Association and an Advocacy Skills Program provides opportunity for law students to use their skills in outreach programs throughout Turkmenistan, conducting a host of "street law" workshops in all five *velayats* (regions), thus bringing legal and civic education to thousands of Turkmen secondary school students. In FY 2000, USAID continued to promote facilitating the implementation of the country's newly adopted oil and gas rules and regulations, organizing workshops and study tours to enhance the capabilities of regulatory agencies, and promoting international standards and practices. The USAID Farmer-to-Farmer (FTF) Program fielded 14 U.S. volunteers on 11 FTF assignments, providing assistance to more than 2,000 Turkmen farmers and entrepreneurs on issues such as on-farm production, association development, water management and civil society development. USAID works to improve health care through health partnerships, reproductive health programs, and the surveillance and treatment of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. USAID's health program includes a partnership between Turkmenistan's Ministry of Health and the University of North Dakota. This cooperation has provided training in new methods for Ashgabat's family physicians in primary health care. USAID worked to control and treat infectious disease and Tuberculosis, with new emphasis on control of HIV/AIDS.

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